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Appointments to Head FBI and CIA

After the revelations of recent years, it is understandable that President Carter is determined to bring the FBI and the CIA under firmer control.

But both organizations perform functions of great importance. They must not be rendered impotent.

The president acknowledges this. But his appointments of directors of these agencies give us pause.

In the case of the FBI, the president has for the second time chosen a federal judge — William Webster — to head the bureau. The first choice, Frank Johnson, had to withdraw for reasons of health.

A judge is a symbol of rectitude, and we suppose Webster will do his best to keep the FBI out of illegal operations.

But the FBI is a police organization — of a special kind — and a career on the bench does not seem to be the ideal preparation for running it. Wouldn't a police chief have been a more suitable choice?

In the case of the CIA, Carter's choice was Adm. Stansfield Turner, who has created an uproar in the organization because of his alleged arbitrariness. But the president, contradicting rumors that he would fire Turner, has instead increased his powers.

Certainly the president needed to exert more control over the FBI and the CIA. But their directors must also be capable of providing leadership in a positive sense, and there is reason to wonder whether the men he has chosen can do the job.